



ENTIRE ABSOLUTION OF THE PENITENT.

SERMON II.

JUDGE THYSELF, THAT THOU BE NOT JUDGED OF THE LORD.

A SERMON

PREACHED

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,

IN THE

CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF CHRIST, IN OXFORD,

ON THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT, 1846.

BY THE

REV. E. B. PUSEY, D.D.

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF HEBREW, CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH, AND
LATE FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE.

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OXFORD,

JOHN HENRY PARKER;

F. AND J. RIVINGTON, LONDON.

1846.

1 COR. xi. 31.

If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

IN my last Sermon, I dwelt upon that authoritative act, whereby God, through the ministry of man, conveys His own sentence of pardon to the soul of the penitent, sets him free from the guilt of his past sins, opens to the blessed influx of His grace the channels which sin had stopped, and often pours at once large grace and love into the soul. But, since the efficacy of Absolution depends upon the penitence of him who receives it, the deeper that penitence, the fuller will be the grace. And so, since special confession, gathering into one before the soul all its greater sins, until it shrinks and recoils and sickens at the miserable sight, mostly brings with it a lowlier self-aborrence, deepens its cry for mercy, and issues in greater love for Him Who loved it amid such loathsomeness and misery, special confession will mostly obtain more grace and have more assurance of pardon. And this I say, not (God forbid!) to lessen the comfort of such as have not been led by Him to desire any other than the general Absolution of all true penitents in the whole congregation, when confession has been made to God only, but as a source of increased comfort to laden or anxious souls who feel that they need what is more special to themselves. The Church (I am compelled to repeat) allows us both ways. In particular cases, she recommends special Confession, and Absolution in form more authoritative. For in the Visitation of the Sick, she directs her

Priests to "move the sick person to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter;" and, as Bp. Sparrow^a adds, "It should be considered, whether every deadly sin be not a weighty matter." She would, at least, secure, that they who have, during health, neglected her warnings at the Holy Communion, and shrunk from the shame, should not pass, clogged with grievous sins, into the Presence of their Judge. We, His Priests, are not to wait for the sick man's wish; we are (if we would obey her, and it has been done of old also) ourselves to "move" the sick man, and suggest to him, that if his conscience be troubled with any weighty matter, he ought to confess it. Absolution is to be given, only on such signs of lowly contrition as betoken "true repentance,"—"if he humbly and heartily desire it," (for the Church could never command the Priest to absolve indiscriminately,) but we are directed, in all cases, to appeal to the sick man's conscience; if he, having need, despise or put it from him, he has to give account of his deed at the Judgment-seat of Christ. And can it be thought that the Church denies that in health, which she recommends in sickness? She who bids us "often to put men in remembrance to settle their temporal estates in health," lest worldly matters should distract the sacred, precious, hours of sickness, would she have us put off to their sick or death-bed, if they ever see it, those who come to us in health, and tell us that they have a burthened conscience? They who would bid men delay it to such an hour, know little of sickness or of wounded consciences, or how difficult it is, while the body is enfeebled, and the head confused by weakness, or by racking or wearing pain, or strong fever, or sleepless nights, for the soul to gather itself up for any duty, much less such a weighty task as this. They who have known such hours, when the

^a Rationale, ad loc.

mind, far from being able to use collected thought or disentangle its maze of sins, sinks down exhausted with any effort, and can only cry in the fewest words wherein prayer can be formed, "Lord, have mercy," know well that they would not, for the whole world, have to disburthen their conscience then. It is, (as they well know, who have either undergone, or, by witnessing, have shared the healthful suffering,) it is enough often, even in health, to turn the head dizzy, when the soul brings before itself the dismal heap of all the heavier sins of a whole life, which by God's grace it can recall. Even then, it must cry out, "I should have fainted, but that I believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." And is this a task to be reserved to the death-bed? Better then, than to neglect it altogether! But who that would have it performed at all, (as the Church wisheth,) would have it reserved to a time, when every power by which it is to be discharged aright, is giving way or crushed in the strong grasp of death? Or is it to be supposed, that penitents will have one "matter," one sin only, on their conscience? Does not our Gracious Lord recover His lost sheep, when wearied out by wanderings; find the piece of silver, when well-nigh buried, and His Image almost encrusted over in the mire of sin? Does He not recover penitents from the very depths of Hell? The bosom, once unlocked, pours not out one sin only. The penitent can find no rest, until he have emptied his whole conscience of all the foul matter which has gangrened there, to the very last drop. There may be some outstanding sins more prominent; but take any, the most common case of one who, through a series of years, has fallen by habitual sin, can such a conscience, think you, easily on a sick-bed make "the special confession of the sins" which "trouble" it during a whole life? Are not consciences sorely troubled by a dim, confused,

memory of countless sins which it strove to hide from itself, strove often to persuade itself not to be sins, and too well succeeded, or which, by the very force of sinning, it came scarcely or not at all to regard as sins, but which, when its sense is anew quickened by God's Holy Spirit, seem to stand so thick, that the whole life seems one intricate, manifold web of sin, one only in sinfulness. Is it then so easy to recal the sins of ten, twenty, perhaps sixty, or seventy years, of an unexamined, unsifted, conscience? Ye know, if ye have ever tried it, how when earnestly bent on the task, at one time one sin flashes upon the conscience, then another; these spots of darkness unfold themselves to the eye, one by one, as it gazes stedfastly on them. "Often," says S. Gregory^b, "what escaped the unawakened, becomes known to the mourner. Who, reckless, knew not their guilt, detect it, when, within themselves, aroused against themselves." "The growing bitterness of penitence, not only heaps up against our heart our greater sins, but even recals the very least. And all these we pursue the more resolutely, the more watchfully we strive to uproot from our heart every germ of evil." Scarce one, probably, even in fullest possession of his mind, with all the helps he can, has found that he has reached at once the depth of this dark abyss. What a task this, when perhaps the hours are numbered and the soul bewildered with the thought of approaching judg-

^b in Ps. 3. Pœnit. v. 19. §. 21.

^c Id. in Ps. 4. Pœnit. v. 3. §. 3. on "Wash me more and more." "May my fall profit me; with this stain, may the spots of offences be washed out, which I have hitherto neglected. For often while we bewail some things done amiss, aroused by the very force of the bitterness to sift ourselves, we find in us other things to be bewailed. Which, when done, we the more easily give over to forgetfulness, as we think them either slighter or nothings. The growing bitterness of penitence, not only heaps up against our heart our greater sins, but even recals the very least. And all these we pursue the more resolutely, the more watchfully we strive to uproot from our heart every germ of evil."

ment, and Satan, as he often is, assailing him with all his force and subtlety, to plunge him into doubt or despair. Is there not enough to do in that last conflict with the Evil one, that last moment of penitence, and imploring of pardon, and faith, and hope, and love, not to burthen it with aught which can be performed before? It is a very axiom, that what is good to be done, before we die, it is good to do *now*, lest death surprise us. It were wantonly to presume on the mercies of God, wilfully to delay to the last hour any thing which ought to be done ere we part out of life. What if there be no last hour for it? What if death come suddenly? "He^d Who promiseth pardon to the penitent, promiseth no morrow to the procrastinator." In that the Church then bids us "move" the sick in body and soul to special confession of sins, if their consciences are "troubled with any weighty matter," she bids us receive them now, if they come to us. In that she would have us, if we need it, "moved" thereto by God's ministers in death, she must wish that God would, if we need it, move us thereto in life. What, again, if after the oil and wine have been poured into the sick man's wounds, he recover his bodily health also? It is well known that one who has once tasted "the benefits of absolution" for heavier sins, and found good for his soul in the special counsels of God's ministers, longs mostly to continue to "open his griefs" for slighter sins into which he afterwards falls, that he finds it a healthful discipline for his soul, a safeguard often, by God's grace, against sin; that God gives him thereby lightness and gladness of heart, to "go on his way," through the wilderness, "rejoicing." Is such an one to be repelled? Is he to be told that the remedy he seeks for is only for those more deeply wounded, or bid go into other folds, if he still would have it? Or, again, in those most sorrowful and difficult cases of relapse

^d See S. Aug. Serm. 82. §. 14. p. 264. Oxf. Tr.

into very grievous sin, are we to imitate the severity of the Primitive Church, without her watchful care and tender love for penitents, and put them off to their sick or death-bed, ere they can be admitted again to hear that sentence of pardon, in which they once tasted the grace of God? No! the Church, our Mother, would not bring all her children, with their varied tempers, needs, languishings, sicknesses, under one rigid, unbending, rule. She shews, in the Exhortation to the Holy Communion, that she would deal, not with laden consciences only, but with timorous, scrupulous, doubting, tender, souls, the lambs of the flock of Christ, otherwise than she would with those who seem to themselves, or are, the strong or the whole. One thing only she excludes, when she excludes any thing, compulsory confession; "that* any man should be *bound* to the numbering of his sins;" "as if," adds Hooker†, "remission of sins otherwise were impossible." But, short of this, in that Exhortation, she strives, with an austere, anxious love, to rouse the conscience, not only as to overt, but as to secret, mental, sins, "if any of you be in malice, envy, or any other grievous crime;" and then, after words, which may well shake the soul through and through, "lest after taking of that Holy Sacrament, the devil enter into you, as he entered into Judas, and fill you full of all iniquities, and bring you to destruction both of body and soul," she straightway insists on the necessity of "a quiet conscience," and invites such as cannot otherwise quiet theirs, to open their griefs, that by the ministry of God's Holy Word, they may receive the benefit of absolution. "By the ministry," she says, "of God's Word,"

* Homily on Repentance. P. II.

† E. P. vi. 4. 15. quoted in "Entire Absolution of the Penitent," Sermon i. p. 12. n. 6. "They" [the Fathers] "doe not only leave it free for men to confesse or not confesse their sinnes unto other (*which is the most that we would have*;) Abp. Ussher's Answer to a Jesuit. And so others.

“for,” (as I said more at large before^g), “all forgiveness of sin, by whomsoever, or howsoever it comes to us, is from Him.” “God Alone forgiveth sin.” ‘The Word of God is the authority by virtue of which the Priest acts; “men,” S. Ambrose says^h, “supply their ministry” only; or as he says againⁱ, “Sins are remitted through the word of God, of which the Levite is the interpreter and a sort of executor: they are remitted also through the office of the Priest, and the sacred ministry.”

Nor can any argument as to the judgment of the Church on this or any other subject be drawn from the mere omission of the more direct injunctions of an earlier form of our English Liturgy^j. It had indeed argued a rashness or fickleness in the Compilers, such as we may well shrink from thinking possible, had they altered, *as a matter of principle*, what a year before^k, they had declared to have been done “by^l aid of the Holy Ghost.” But

^g Ibid. p. 4. sqq.

^h de Sp. S. iii. 10. see S. Ambrose more fully, Serm. i. p. 6—8.

ⁱ de Cain et Abel ii. 4. §. 15. (see, further, Note A. at the end.) Bp. Morton accordingly substitutes “the office of the Minister” as equivalent; (Appeal, p. 270. quoted by Bp. Montagu, Appeal to Cæsar, c. 35.) “And indeed the power of absolution, whether it be general or particular, whether in public or in private, it is possessed in our Church, where both in our Public Service is proclaimed pardon and absolution upon all penitents; and a private applying of particular absolution unto penitents *by the office of the Minister*. And greater power than this, no man hath received from God.” So then Bp. Overall in substituting “by the Minister,” (see below p 15, n. a.) did no more, in fact, than Bp. Morton. The object of all is to express that the authority is ministerial only.

^j Book of Common Prayer A.D. 1549. In the rubric on “special confession” in “the Visitation of the Sick,” there then stood, “and the same form shall be used in all private confessions.” This was omitted in 1552.

^k “The commissioners appear to have *completed* their revision of the Book of Common Prayer before the end of the year 1551.” The changes began to be agitated a year after the publication of the first, Ib. p. xvi. from Heylyn, Hist. Ref. p. 106.

^l Act for the Uniformity of Service &c. A. 2 et 3 Edv. VI.—“the Archbishop of Canterbury and certain of the most learned and discreet Bishops and other learned men of this realm having as well eye and respect to the most sincere and pure Christian religion taught by the Scriptures, as to the

now, on the contrary, they again affirmed it to be “a^m very godly order,” “agreeable to the Word of God and the Primitive Church;” and so they bore witness to what they were compelled to withdraw, even while they suppressed its expression. Nor if we turn to the practice of her most faithful sons, shall we think that a new thing, or foreign to the meaning of the Church, or limited to certain cases of gross sin, which the pious Hooker and Saravia habitually used; and of Hooker and good Bp. Saunderson, we hear, that at the eve of death, after receiving Absolution, “the mind of the oneⁿ seemed more cheerful,” on the other’s^o face there seemed “a reverend gaiety and joy.”

usages of the primitive Church, should draw and make one convenient and meet order, rite, and fashion of common and open prayer and administration of the Sacraments, to be had and used in his Majesty’s kingdom of England and Wales, the which at this time, *by the aid of the Holy Ghost* with one uniform agreement, is of them concluded.”

^m Act for the Uniformity of Common Prayer &c. A. 5 et 6 Edv. VI. “When there hath been a *very godly Order* set forth by authority of Parliament, for common prayer and administration of the Sacraments, to be used in the mother tongue, within this Church of England, *agreeable to the Word of God and the primitive Church*, very comfortable to all good people desiring to live in Christian conversation &c. And because there hath risen, in the use and exercise of the aforesaid common service in the Church, heretofore set forth, divers doubts for the fashion and manner of the ministration of the same, *rather by the curiosity of the minister and mistakers, than of any other worthy cause*, therefore as well for the more plain and manifest explanation hereof, as for the more perfection of the said order of common service, in some places where it is necessary to make the same prayer and fashion of service more earnest and fit to stir Christian people to the true honouring of Almighty God &c.” Whatever these last words may be meant to apply to, it is clear, 1) that the book in its earlier form is approved and the objections treated as cavils; 2) that the concessions were made to a party, whose successors went out of the Church and trampled it under foot, 3) the most material of these changes, (a very painful one) was subsequently rescinded.

ⁿ Walton’s Life of Bp. Saunderson, Lives, ii. p. 258. Oxf. 1805.

^o Ib. i. p. 345, 6. He received it as a preparation for his last Communion, after which this effect was seen. It was the day before his blessed death. Bp. Andrewes also says of himself in his “private prayers,” “Who hast opened a door of hope *to me, confessing* and entreating, through the power of the mysteries and of the keys. (John xx. 22. Matt. xvi. 19.)” p. 258, ed. Hall. Bp. Taylor, again, even where he complains of the rareness of Confession

Nor, again, can it be said, that, in her meaning, the solemn words "by His Authority committed unto me, I absolve thee from all thy sins in the Name of the FATHER and of the SON and of the HOLY GHOST," relate to the removal of censures of the Church only. On the contrary, the portion of the older form^o, which rather relates to those censures, is omitted, and that part only is retained which directly relates to the remission of sins. Again, the sins which we are bid to urge men to confess, are sins by which the penitent's conscience is troubled, sins known to himself and to God only, and these are no objects of the censure of the Church. They are sins, which the Priest knows not of, whereas a Priest could

amongst us in his times, implies that it *was* practised, not in sickness only, but in health. He is speaking of the easiness of absolution, in the modern Church, whether in England or the Roman Communion. "To confess and to absolve is all the method of our modern repentance, even when it is most severe. Indeed, in the Church of England, I cannot so easily blame that proceeding; because there are so few that use the proper and secret ministry of a spiritual guide, that it is to be supposed he that does so, hath long repented and done some violence to himself and more to his sins, before he can master himself so much as to bring himself to submit to that ministry." Doctrine and practice of Repentance, c. ix. s. 6. §. 68. And again, the "advice concerning Confession" in the Guide for the Penitent, which is either Bp. Taylor's or that of a like-minded contemporary, implies that it was a recognised practice. "You are advised by the Church, under whose discipline you live, that before you are to receive the holy Sacrament, or when you are visited with any dangerous sickness, if you find any one particular sin, or more, that lies heavy upon you, to disburden yourself of it into the bosom of your confessor, who not only stands between God and you to pray for you, but hath the power of the keys committed to him, upon your true repentance, to absolve you in Christ's Name from those sins which you have confessed to him." The fact that this has been a received book among us, which since Bishop Taylor's time has accompanied the Golden Grove, implies surely that the advice has been followed. A book would not continue to be popular, if a main rule in it went against people's practice. They would take what was more kindred with their practice. It is said also by those who have read the notices of private habits before the Revolution of 1688, that Confession and spiritual guidance were received practices.

° "Et sacramentis ecclesiæ te restituo." See Sarum Manual in Mr. Palmer's Antiq. of Eng. Rit. ii. 226.

hardly be ignorant, whether one, committed to his charge, had fallen under the public censures of the Church or no. Nor, again, has the Church any where given to the Priest the power of removing her censures, in cases of ordinary sickness^o.

But, in truth, the doctrine of the Church herein is very clear and explicit. She distinctly says in her Homily, "Absolution hath the promise of forgiveness of sins." At our Ordination as Priests, she repeated to each of us our Lord's words^p, "Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven." Upon the special confession of the sick, she bids us absolve him; and the words of Absolution contain a rehearsal of the authority through which we do it. "By His Authority committed unto me, I absolve thee from all thy sins" in the Name of the All-Holy Trinity, in Whose Name we received our commission. She speaks of "the benefit of Absolution," as distinct^q from "ghostly advice and counsel," both being needed for the penitent; she retains in her Ordinations, and Absolution of the sick, the ancient words. What had this been but hypocrisy and double dealing, had she not meant it in the same sense as of old? What unreality and mockery were it of the penitent's hopes, what ashes for bread, nay, rather a scorpion, what waste of precious moments on which eternity may hang, to move the sick to confess his *sins*, then, in solemn words, which sinful men may well tremble to use, to "absolve him," if truly penitent, "from all his *sins*," if this solemn act is not of value to his soul, or relates only to Church censures, under which these secret

^o The instances mentioned in Bingham, 19. 3. are all cases of necessity.

^p "He" [the Jesuit] "hath done us open wrong in charging us to deny that 'Priests have power to forgive sins,' whereas the very formal words which our Ordination requireth to be used in the Ordination of a Minister are these, 'Whose sins thou dost forgive, &c.'" Abp. Ussher, Answer to Challenge, p. 313

^q "The benefit of absolution, together with ghostly advice and counsel." Exhort. and Order of Holy Comm.

sins do not fall. There is no middle way. Either the Church speaks truly wherein she says, "our Lord JESUS CHRIST hath left power with His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him," or those her most solemn acts of Ordination and Absolution would be, (as those without her have alleged,) year by year and day by day, accumulated blasphemy. Of her own meaning there can be no doubt, that, deferring as she does throughout to "the Primitive Church which," she says^r, "is especially to be followed as most uncorrupt and pure," she, using its language, doth so in its meaning also, and asserts her power of absolution in the same sense as he whom she calls "the holy^s father," "the^t holy Martyr of God, St. Cyprian," who, from our Lord's own words^u, thus infers, "The power then of remitting sins was given to the Apostles and to the Churches which they, sent by Christ, established, and to the Bishops who succeeded to them by vicarious ordination;" or in briefer words and yet earlier times, by St. Cyprian's master^x, "Confession shall quench to them the fires of hell."

We may then (whether priests or penitents or both in one) have full comfort that the Church of England has

^r Homily against Peril of Idolatry, Sermon. 3. add Sermon. 2. twice.

^s Hom. of Alms deeds.

^t Hom. of Repentance, Sermon. 3.

^u "Again in the Gospel, when Christ breathed on the Apostles only saying, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, &c.' The power then of remitting sins, &c. (Ep. 75. §. 17. p. 279. Oxf Tr.) St. Cyprian is proving that "remission of sins can be given" in the Church only, not "in the synagogues of heretics." add Ep. 73. §. 7. p. 247.

^x Tertull. de Pœnit. §. 12. p. 368. Oxf. Tr. "If thou drawest back from Confession," [exomologesis, the whole course of the prescribed penitence, ending in absolution,] "consider in thine heart that hell-fire which confession shall quench for thee, and first imagine to thyself the greatness of the punishment, that thou mayest not doubt concerning the adoption of the remedy." Comp. Abp. Bramhall, pt. iv. Disc. 7. t. v. p. 222. Oxf. Ed. "By a little shame which we suffer before our fellow-servant, we prevent that great confusion of face, which otherwise must fall upon impenitent sinners at the Day of Judgment."

denied or abridged nothing of that "ministry of reconciliation" which God has committed to His Church. Not to constrain Confession, is not to deny it; to leave it to the penitent's choice, is not to refuse it, if chosen; we are not set free one way, to be limited in the other; freed from the necessity of confession, to be denied, if we crave it, the comforts of special absolution—a freedom more like that denounced by the prophet, "Behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, to the famine," than to that "liberty wherewith Christ has made us free." The Church leaves us free, yet fails not to remind us of the responsibilities which that very freedom entails upon us. A reverent, tender, mind may well pause, ere he attempt to abridge, either way, that freedom, or call in question that use of the keys, which as it hath never been laid aside, but rather advocated at all times by Bishops² and Divines of note, and recognised by our Canons³, so now has it been and is resorted to by thou-

¹ Jer. xxxiv. 17.

² See in Mr. Wordsworth's Appendix to a Sermon on Evangelical Repentance. The writers from which extracts are there given, are not from one section of the Church. Bp. Morton and Bp. White and Archbishop Ussher speak distinctly, as well as Bp. Overall and Abp. Bramhall and Bp. Taylor. Add Bp. Cosin, who in the "points of agreement with the Church of Rome" (in Hickes' Letters, t. i. App.) sets down, "In public or private absolution of penitent sinners;" and Dean Comber *ad loc.* more at large.

³ The extent of the practice of old is evinced by the Canon on the subject. Can. 113. of our present Canons (A. 1603.) in permitting Ministers to join in presentments, excepts the case of confession. But Canons are not made except with reference to existing practice. Its words are; "Provided always, that if any man confess his secret and hidden sins to the Minister, for the unburdening of his conscience, and to receive spiritual consolation and ease of mind from him; we do not any way bind the said Minister by this our Constitution, but do straitly charge and admonish him, that he do not at any time reveal and make known to any person whatsoever any crime or offence so committed to his trust and secrecy, (except they be such crimes as by the laws of this realm his own life may be called into question for concealing the same,) under pain of irregularity." [Dr. Heylyn subjoins, Theol. Vet. (on the Creed,) p. 486. "And *pœna irregularitatis*, as the Canonists tell us, not only doth deprive a man of all his spiritual promotions for the present time, but makes

sands in these later years, not exhorted thereto by man, but impelled and constrained by God's voice within the conscience, to seek therein, as they have found, pardon, and grace, and peace. Rather we may well implore persons, in the Name of "the God of peace," herein to follow the charitable counsel of our first English Liturgy^b, "requiring such as shall be satisfied with a general confession not to be offended with them that do use, to their further satisfying, the auricular and secret confession to the priest, nor those also which think needful or convenient, for the quietness of their own consciences, particularly to open their sins to the priest, to be offended with

him utterly incapable of any for the time to come; and therefore is the greatest penalty, except degradation from his priesthood, which possibly a clergyman can be subject to." He adds also, that the same exception, here allowed, was made also "in the re-admission of the Jesuits into the University of Paris." (Contin. of the Fr. Hist. p. 30.)] Bp. Overall accordingly in his Visitation Articles 1619, (Art. 21.) enquired: "Whether doth your Minister before the several times of the administration of the Lord's Supper, admonish and exhort his parishioners, if they have their consciences troubled and disquieted, to resort unto him, or some other learned Minister, and open his grief, that he may receive such ghostly counsel and comfort, as his conscience may be relieved, and by the Minister he may receive the benefit of absolution, to the quiet of his conscience, and avoiding of scruple. And if any man confess his secret and hidden sins, being sick or whole, to the Minister, for the unburdening of his conscience, and receiving such spiritual consolation, doth or hath the said Minister at any time, revealed and made known to any person whomsoever, any crime or offence so committed to his trust, contrary to the 113th Canon?" (in Heylyn l. c. and more fully in Bp. Montagu, "Answer to late Gagger of Protestants," c. 12.) Bp. Montague, subjoins in answer to his R. C. opponent, "Which is not like the injunction of those that hold, 'We *must* confess our sins but only unto God.'" Heylyn further says: "It was made one of the enquiries in the Book of Articles established in the Convocation of the year 1640, for a perpetual rule and standard in all episcopal and archidiaconal visitations, (Canon 9.) and proposed thus to the Churchwardens, viz. "Have you ever heard that your said Priest or Minister hath revealed and made known at any time to any person whatsoever any crime or offence committed to his trust and secreesy, either in extremity of sickness, or in any other case whatsoever, (except they be such crimes as by the laws of this land, &c.) declare the name of the offender, when and by whom you heard the same." (Article of Peril, c. 2. n. 25.)

^b Second Exhortation, p. 278. ed. Cardwell.

them that are satisfied with their humble confession to God, and the general confession to the Church, but in all things to follow and keep the rule of charity, and every one to be satisfied with his own conscience, not judging other men's minds or consciences, whereas he hath no warrant of God's word to the same." Would that in these days of trouble and sorrow, we could more and more lay to heart this loving counsel, "judging nothing before the time," "judging not Another's servant," but each labouring, with what wisdom God gives to each, to save some, with himself, out of a perishing world!

But does, then, in effect, this solemn act of Absolution come to the same as that unearnest modern way in which persons, with some slight acknowledgment of the frailty of their nature, virtually absolve themselves? or does frequent absolution, like man's ordinary easy self-forgiveness, encourage relaxed ways? "If God bids man often repent," said the Novatian, "He allows him often to sin." "Perchance," (is part of the answer of S. Pacian^c), "I might allow this, if luxury were accounted penitence, on which such toil is imposed, the destruction of the flesh enjoined, continual tears, unending groans." And therefore the Church of England wherever, in her Liturgy, she speaks of repentance, is careful to speak also of "true^d," "earnest," "unfeigned," "faithful," "hearty," "worthy," repentance, nor ever names it without some word to express its reality; well knowing how easily and how fatally we might mistake

^c Ep. iii. 21.

^d "*true repentance*" (twice in the daily Absolution, thrice Visitation of the Sick) being omitted in the prayers for "persons troubled in mind or in conscience," "add *seriousness* to his *repentance*," (Visitation of the Sick,) "*unfeigned repentance*," (ib.) "*earnest and true repentance*," (Commination Service,) "*faithful repentance*," (ib.) "*with all contrition*," (ib.) "if with a *true penitent* heart, we—for *then* we, &c." (Service for H. Communion,) "*repent you truly*," (ib.) "ye that do *truly and earnestly* repent you," "who with *hearty repentance* and true faith," (ib.) "all that *truly* turn to Him," (ib.) "*worthily lamenting* our sins," (Collect for Ashwed.)

for it a false repentance, itself to be repented for, everlastingly, but hopelessly. David said, "I have sinned," and the Prophet said, "Therefore hath the Lord put away thy sin." Saul said, "I have sinned," but the Prophet answered, "Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel." Judas said, "I have sinned," and went and hanged himself. All confessed alike; but Saul had no humility, Judas no hope^e. "What availeth," saith S. Gregory the Great, "to confess wickednesses, if the affliction of penitence follow not the voice of Confession. For in every one truly penitent, three things are to be considered, the conversion of the heart, the confession of the mouth, and the revenge on sin^f." And all these have, in hope, exceeding sweetness, sweeter far than all the destructive pleasure for which men sell their souls; yet all have deep, searching, pain.

^e "Let no man, dearest, propose to himself this sort of penitence [that for graver sins], let no one prepare himself for this; yet if it should be, let no one despair. Judas the traitor, not so much the wickedness he committed as despair of forgiveness, caused to perish utterly. He was not worthy of mercy, therefore no light shone in his heart, that he should run speedily to His mercy Whom he had betrayed, as did they who had crucified Him; but despairing he killed himself, he hung, he suffocated himself.—What he did in his body, that had taken place in his soul. They who despair of the forgiveness of God, by their very despair suffocate themselves within, so that the Holy Spirit cannot visit them." S. Aug. Serm. 352. de Pœnit. ii. 8. So also S. Chrys.

^f S. Gregory ad loc. "He sheweth the quality of his confession in that he added, 'But now honour me before the elders of my people, and before Israel.' It is clear what sort of penitence he hath, who still desires to be honoured. For had he been truly penitent for his sin, he would have desired to be dishonoured rather than honoured. Well may we marvel at the hardness of a rejected heart. When the Man of God, executing the command of the Creator, said, 'The Lord hath rejected thee from being king,' he, on the contrary, who receiveth the sentence of rejection, through desire of eminence seeketh honour. What is then that he saith, 'I have sinned?' On confession of sin, there should follow not honour or glory, but vileness and contempt. For what availeth, &c.'" (as in text.) L. vi. in 1 Reg. c. 2. §. 33.

It is mostly through searching pain, some stunning blow or sharp piercing stroke without, or strong inward mental fear and agony, that the sinner is deadened to the world, and made alive to God. Suspended life cannot flow again without deep pain. "No one," says St. Augustine^g, "chooseth a new life, but who repenteth him of the old." "Man must long to become what he hath *not* been, hate what he *hath* been." What is repentance, but, out of love to God, to will from the heart all undone which has offended Him, with strong purpose never more to offend Him? Yet we cannot wish undone, what we do not hate; and so the first dealing of God with the soul mostly is, to make it condemn itself, to place itself before the sinner's face, bring before him all which he had hitherto striven to put behind his back and hide from himself, and by a lightning-flash to pierce his darkness and shew him the pit of Hell which yawns beneath his feet. "If we would judge ourselves," says Holy Scripture, "we should not be judged^h." Yet "judge ourselves" not with a slight superficial judgment, "after the manner of dissemblers with God," but by a strict, searching, thorough, judgment, as far as man is capable; (*διεξιγίνωμεν*,) not judging only, but sifting itself through and through; its acts, motives, circumstances; the aggravations of its sins, and their endurance; the light against which he sinned, the checks of conscience, or the motions of God's Holy Spirit; the scandal to others, or the peril of others' souls, which he hath injured, but which he cannot restore. Strict must that judgment be, which is to forestall and turn aside the Judgment of God.

^g l. c. §. 2.

^h "He does not [here] say, 'if we punished ourselves,' 'if we were revenged on ourselves,' but only if we would acknowledge our offence, pass sentence on ourselves, condemn the things done amiss, we should escape the punishment both in this world and the next. For he that condemns himself, propitiates God in two ways, both by acknowledging his sins, and by being more on his guard for the future." S. Chrys. ad loc.

Hitherto the sinner had hidden, like Adam, his sin, invented excuses, silenced or stifled or drugged his conscience, rebuked it when it would speak, laid his sin to outward circumstances, failure, perhaps, in others, neglect of education, nay even of the Church, or the frailty and powerlessness of nature, or the strength of temptation and the impossibility of resisting it, in other words on God Himself, the Author of that nature, and the Disposer of all the accidents of our lives. And now he must be to himself in God's stead, and judge himself as God would judge him. He has hitherto been his own advocate to plead for himself; now he must be his own judge, to condemn himself. And what sort of judge? Even, as far as he can attain, like Him Who "trieth the very heart and reins," discerneth the thoughts and intents of the heart, before Whose Eyes all is naked, Who shall bring every secret thing into judgment, good or bad; Him Whom Holy Scripture calls, "*The Judge*," "*The Righteous*," "*The Just, Judge*," "*a Mighty and a Terrible, Which regardeth not persons nor taketh rewards*," that Judge, "*Who hateth them that work iniquity*" and "*will by no means spare the guilty*," in Whose "*judgment the ungodly cannot stand*." It is the majesty of human law, that the judge is the Minister of God; "*he beareth not the sword in vain*;" his sentence, when just, is a sort of "*type and earnest of the great Judgment-seat*." What when the judge has to enter into that inward court, where God Himself resides, where He has often spoken, warned, pleaded, but in vain, against the deed, ere it was committed, and now still writes His sentence there, if we will read it! "*If our heart condemn us*," says Holy Scripture, "*God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things*. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards

ⁱ Deut. x. 17.

God." Every pang of the heart is a witness on behalf of God against the sinner, His sentence bound up in the soul itself, there to remain for ever, unless He Who wrote it there, Himself efface it. And now, in that awful silence of the soul, himself with himself, where no eye can reach except his own and God's, with no patron, no plea, no friend, he has to open that fearful book, wherein all the evil he has ever done is written, retrace the faded character of forgotten sin, revive what he had well-nigh blotted from his own memory, and again and again pronounce "Guilty" against himself, knowing that it is himself whom he is sentencing, himself whom he is pronouncing worthy of eternal woe. All pleas for his sin must fall off, like scales from his eyes, as they will before the Eye of God. He must stand, as it were, aloof from himself, and, quickened by God's Holy Spirit, behold with steadfast gaze, himself, as God beholdeth him, in all the deformity and vileness of his sins. "Let man," says an old writer on this place^k, "ascend the judgment-seat of his soul against himself, let him place himself before his face, and when in his heart the judgment is set, let memory stand forth the accuser, and conscience the witness, and fear the executioner. So shall the blood, as it were, of the confessing soul flow forth in tears. Be there before his eyes an image of the Judgment to come, and whatsoever he shall see in himself, which can be sentenced and punished by Him Who shall come to be our Judge, let him now in himself condemn and punish." It is an awful office, to stand in God's stead; it is an awful, dreadful sight, for a sinner to see himself. All, all his folly^l, unthankfulness, hardness of heart, con-

^k Comm. in S. Paul, Epp. ascribed to S. Anselm. Cave says they belong to Herveus Dolensis, A. 1130. but this passage is quoted as S. Augustine's by Pet. Lombard, A. 1140.

^l Bishop Andrewes, Latin Devotions in his deep "confession of sin," p. 301—320. ed. Hall.

tempt; all, in thought, word, and deed, against God, his neighbour, or his own body; all of childhood, youth, or ripening years; secret or manifest; sins of his own or occasioned to others; his besetting, repeated, sins, or sins from very wantonness, without temptation, which he drew, as it were, on himself,—well might the sinner shrink, as he does, from such a sight as this, unless the sentence stood, “judge thyself, that thou be not judged of the Lord.” Yet the knowledge of the sin in itself were, as yet, as nothing. Heathen have seen their sins, and known them to be hateful, and acted them anew. He must behold them, as God sees them, not as sins only, but as a Christian’s sins. What has not the fallen Christian done, against Whom has he sinned, what has he forfeited? Misery enough it is, to sit in darkness, to be cold to heavenly things, to know not the sweetness of intercourse with God; but what intenser misery to have blinded, chilled, deafened a man’s own soul, that he cannot “know” his Saviour’s “Voice.” Misery enough is the bondage of Satan, the iron rule of custom, whereby man’s sins are multiplied against his will, when sin added to sin are, S. Augustine^m says, “the links of that hard chain, which hold the soul enthralled against its will.” But heavier is it yet, to pronounce against thyself that it is “deservedly; since willingly” the soul forged these fetters for itself, and for “the glorious liberty of the sons of God,” chose the hard bondage and the toil in the miry clay from which it had been freed. Misery is it, for the soul to feel wholly a wreck of itself; what, itself to have made that wreck! What was it, as new born it arose in the brightness of baptismal purity? Fairer far, and more glorious, than when it was first created, brighter than “the sun when he goeth forth in his might,” since it was clothed with Christ, and the Eyes of God rested with love upon it, as bearing

^m Conf. viii. 5, 6.

on it the likeness of His Well-beloved Son, and the Holy Trinity chose it, as a sanctuary wherein to dwell, "There will I rest, for I have a delight therein." Nay more still, the depths of Heaven stood open to it; "no good thing will He withhold from him that leadeth a godly life." No, not Himself, by Whose grace he leads it. He giveth grace for grace; each grace well-used expands the soul to receive more grace, and the enlarged soul containeth more of God, and God filling the soul enlarges it, and enlarging, fills it. No bound is there to the growth in grace and love but that which is boundless, "the measure of the stature of the Fulness of Christ." [No order, it seems, of the Heavenly Hierarchy, but lost of its host in the fall of the Apostate Angelsⁿ. No order, it is believed, but is to be filled out of that humanity, which God the Son, by taking it, hath deified^o.] Such might it have been! What is it now? Holy penitents^p have heaped together all the most loathsome objects, from which the eye turns sickened, to form some faint image of the loathsomeness of their own soul when leprous from sin. Yet all imaginable loathsomeness gathered in one, were no shadow of that act, whereby unclean spirits dwell in the temple of God, and man, the image of God, receives in him, nay becomes, the image of the Evil One. "By sin," says a holy man^q, "man becomes alien from God, a destroyer of himself, a child of hell, a mansion of confusion, a slave of the devil, a scoffer at grace, a despiser of glory." And *for what?* It is thought that it will be

ⁿ Satan himself is called a Cherub, (Ezek. xxviii. 16.) there are also "Angels," "Principalities," "Authorities," "Powers," *ἀρχαί, ἰξουρίας, δυνάμεις*, among the evil spirits, Rom. viii. 38. Eph. vi. 12. Col. ii. 15, as among the good, Eph. iii. 10. Col. ii. 10 2 Pet. iii. 22.

^o See S. Athan. c. Ariann. ii. 21. p. 380. and not. p. Oxf. Tr.

^p Here too, in part, our own Bp. Andrewes, (Morning Prayers,) "an unclean worm, a dead dog, a putrid corpse," "putredo et vermis," p. 300.

^q S. Laur. Justin. de perf. grad. c. 1.

one of the miseries of the damned, to know, that, when they might for a few years' toil and self-denial have had the bliss of heaven, they bartered it for that unutterable, endless woe; *and for what?* For what too many know, it would seem to defile this holy place to name; for what they cannot themselves bear to think of.

Such thoughts must the penitent soul have before it in its hours of misery; its own decay, the intensity of its loss, the foulness of the deadly gain for which it sold itself, its forfeiture of the brightness of grace, and its glorious inheritance, the unutterable loathsomeness of each single sin! What when they are countless! "Thou, O Lord," says the great penitent^r of the Christian Church, "Thou didst turn me round towards myself, taking me from behind my back where I had placed me, unwilling to observe myself, and setting me before my face, that I might see how foul I was, how crooked and defiled, bespotted and ulcerous. And I beheld and stood aghast; and whither to flee from myself I found not.—And if I sought to turn my eyes from off myself, Thou again didst set me over against myself, and thrustest me before my eyes that I might find out my iniquity, to hate it."

Yet even this, although of all sights, to the human soul the most unbearable, is as nothing still, compared to the thought, "against Whom have I done this," "Whom have I offended," Whose gift, alas! Whose Blood have I trampled under foot? It is the very depth of human misery, and the very "mystery of iniquity," that a worm of earth can resist, offend, do despite to, such Majesty, such Goodness, Gentleness, and Love. It is a fearful power to be able to cast away the gift of Infinite Love; to set Almighty Power at defiance, yet itself below all creatures, over which He set us; to use all the senses which He gave, the whole body and soul, to rebellion against Him; to

^r S. Aug. Conf. viii. 7.

have entered into His very Sanctuary, and there, in His very Presence, to have marred His Image; perverted Reason, which is His Attribute and Effluence; used Free-will, to will what He willed not; defiled memory, the image of God's knowledge; warped Conscience, His Voice and Representative. Fearful is it to have abused and wasted His gifts of nature, of Providence, and of Grace; but to have profaned His Name in ourselves, to have wasted the price of His Blood, to have despised His Voice speaking within the sinner's self, to have, wilfully, not fled only from His Presence, but driven forth that Gracious Presence from the soul, and for Him Who is All-Good to have received in exchange Him Who is All-evil—well might the fathers call repentance a Baptism of tears; well might it draw forth tears of blood, and, were it possible, the blessed Angels weep over such a wreck as this, such misery undoing the work of so much mercy! The mere beholding of a man's own sin might produce remorse or despair; the thought of God's love against Whom he had so sinned, while it deepens the self-abhorrence melts the sternness of self-hatred, into penitential love.

But when the soul has thus judged and (as it must) condemned itself, will it be an idle sentence? Will it not be ready to avenge Him Whose sentence it has pronounced against itself? Will this heavy review of sins be a mere pageant, which shall last its hour, and issue in nothing? Shall a luxurious monarch have been ready to lay hands on himself, that he had killed his friend, "so great," says a heathen*, "is the vehemence of repentance," and will the Christian penitent, who has gone forth guilty from the Judgment-seat of God and pronounced against itself in His Name, that he has "crucified the Son of God afresh," will he "say to his soul, Eat, drink, and be merry?"

* Cic. Tusc. iv. 37. quoted by Bishop Taylor on Repentance, iv. 6. §. 75.

Not so Holy Scripture, nor nobler souls, to whom God with renewed life, has restored the sense whence they had fallen. "Revenge" is the last and summit of the goodly array of the workings of that "penitence, whereof," St. Paul says, "there shall be no repentance^t." They are not passing, but abiding fruits, lasting until with them the soul be gathered into the garner of the Lord; tears gathered into His bottle, which through the Blood of Christ shall at the Judgment-Day have been found to have washed away the foulest stains; seven-fold gifts to the penitent from God the Holy Ghost, to replace and restore the seven-fold gifts which he had lost. "Earnestness" opens the blessed train, dissipating all sluggishness and listlessness and security; then "acknowledgment" of its offence; "indignation" with itself; "fear" of damnation, and of the loss of the sight of God, and of relapses into sins, "longing" for its lost graces and the light of His Countenance; "zeal" for His glory and for future growth in grace; and lastly "revenge," (*ἐκδίκησις*), the very property of God. "Vengeance" is Mine," *Ἐμοὶ ἐκδίκησις*, a word, no where in the New, and scarcely in the Old Testament, used but of the vengeance of God, or that which is taken by the minister of His Justice, executing His sentence. "Vengeance" on himself, or "the fulfilment of the sentence of God," (*ἐκδίκησις*), is the completion of the judgment on himself, (*διεκρίνομεν*.) In the mercy of God, he was permitted to stand to himself in the place of God as

^t "For no one," says St. Chrysostom, "will find fault with himself, that he be grieved for his sin, that he mourn, and bruise himself." (ad loc. Hom. 15. §. 2.)

^u *ἀπολογία*.

^v In the New Testament of the agency of God's instruments, Acts vii. 24. 1 Pet. ii. 14. in the LXX of human beings, without direct reference to God, only Jud. xv. 7; xvi. 29. (of Samson) Lam. iii. 59. Ezek. xxv. 15. (of the heathen, in contrast with the vengeance of God, vers. 14. 17.)

^w Rom. xii. 19. Heb. x. 30. "God of Vengeance." (*ἰνδικησίων*), Ps. xciii. 1. LXX.

Judge; in the mercy of God, he is permitted to be to himself as God, as the chastener of his sins, the executioner of his own sentence. "Every one who is a penitent," says that great penitent and doctor, St. Augustine^x, "and in penitence confesseth his sins, is angry with himself, and in a manner, by penitence avengeth in himself what displeaseth himself. For God hateth sin. If thou also hatest in thyself what God also hateth, thou art in a degree united in will to God, in that thou hatest in thyself what God also hateth. Exercise severity on thyself, that God may intercede for thee, and not condemn thee. For sin is certainly to be punished. This is due to sin, punishment, condemnation. Sin is to be punished either in thee or by thee. If it is punished by thee, then it will be punished without thee; but if it is not punished by thee, it will be punished with thee."

And this punishment, God's written law, within the conscience or without, in the consent of all mankind, or in His Providence, in His Word or in His Voice within the soul, should bear some proportion to the sin. Not (technically) to make satisfaction to the Justice of Almighty God, (for this, the Blood of His Co-Equal Son Alone sufficed,) but as belonging to that penitence, which through That Blood shall be accepted. "A mighty wound," says St. Ambrose^y, "needeth a deep and lengthened cure. A mighty wickedness needeth mighty amends." "Whoso^z hath heaped up the offence, heap he up also the penitence. For mightier sins are washed away by mightier tears." For so says God by the great preacher of repentance, "Bring forth fruits (*ἀξίους*) worthy of repentance^a." What doth repent-

^x Serm. 29. fin. see other passages in Note K, on Tertullian. p. 376. Oxf. Tr.

^y de virg. laps. c. 8. §. 36.

^z de pœnit. i. 2. see others, l. c. p. 375.

^a "It is one thing to bring forth 'fruits of penitence,' another, to bring forth 'fruits worthy of penitence.' For the fruit of good works ought not to be alike in him who has less, and him who has more, sinned, or in him who

ance? It closeth the depths of Hell, it opens the heights of Heaven. It^b places the sinner with the holy Angels, restores His lost creature to the Creator. All, even the slightest sin, is indeed worthy of more sorrow than we can feel for it; and the holy have wept more bitterly the infirmities from which our nature is not yet freed, than most of us, even deadly sin. Yet it were to apply the very paradox of Stoical philosophy to Christian penitence, to say that because all sin is deeply offensive to Almighty God, the deepest sins need no deeper repentance than the slightest. To be fretted or to be angered is no such sin as to lie; to lie is not to commit adultery. All sin does not put man out of a state of grace; efface the image of God; invite "seven spirits more wicked than the first, to dwell" in the man; "defile," in that fearful way, "the temple of God;" "trample under foot the Son of God." And fruits which might be worthy of repentance of lesser sins, do not betoken the deep, humbled, broken-hearted sorrow for the greatest, "which God will not despise." We do not sorrow for an acquaintance as for a parent, for a friend's sickness as for his death; no more then, for the sickness of the soul as for its death. But, saith St. Cyprian, "hapless^c one, it is thine own soul thou hast lost; dead in spirit, thou hast begun to survive thyself, and, a living corpse, to carry about thee thine own death." If thou wouldest measure what fruits are worthy of thy repentance, weigh well the grievousness of thy sins, the blackness of thy ingratitude, the grace thou hast resisted and

has fallen in no, or in some, or many grievous sins. By these words then, 'bring forth fruits worthy of repentance,' the conscience of each is cited, that one should seek so much the greater gain of good works through penitence, the greater losses he inflicted upon himself through sin." S. Greg. ad loc. Hom. 20. in Evang. §. 8.

^b "Hæc est quæ homines ad Angelos ducit, et creaturam reddit Creatori." de vera et falsa pœnit. init. ap. S. Aug. t. vi. App.

^c de laps. §. 19.

forfeited, the depth of hell from which, by God's mercy, it shall raise thee.

“Take heed to thyself,” says S. Basil^d, “that in proportion to the fault thou admit also the restoration from the remedy. Great and grievous is the sin, thou hast need of much penitence, of bitter tears, of intense watching, of an unbroken fast. Is the offence light and bearable? Be the penitence also proportioned. Only take heed to thyself, that thou know thy mind's health and disease.”

Yet herein, if any where, is the advice of a physician of the soul needed, lest, in the first fervour and bitterness of repentance, penitents use unwise means of that “chastening of the body,” which S. Paul commended and practised; or with weaker frames they be unable to bear the austerities of the early Church; or with weaker wills they grow weary of severities which they have not yet obtained grace to bear, and give up altogether repentance and hopes of life.

Yet repentance, although its outward expressions may change, must be the same always; and even if we cannot come up to them, it is well to set before us the austere penitence of Holy Scripture and the early Church, to quicken our laggard steps to something which may be an earnest of our sorrow, and may, by outward action, stamp the inward feeling more deeply into the soul. If we cannot^e, as S. Basil speaks, use “an unbroken fast,” at least we may keep penitentially the fasts of the Church; we may use food as medicine for the daily decays of

^d Hom. in verba Attende tibi ipsi. §. 4. t. 2. p. 19.

^e So, again, Bp. Andrewes, (although the writer knew it not,) “If not all night, as CHRIST, yet for one hour. If not on the earth, if not in ashes, yet not on couches. If not in sackcloth, yet not in purple and fine linen. If not altogether from all, yet from pleasant morsels. If not, as Zaccheus, fourfold, yet, as is the law, (Lev. v. 16.) adding a fifth. If not as the rich, yet as the widow. If not half, yet the thirtieth. If not above my power, yet to my power.” Latin Prayers, p. 334.

nature, not for luxury; we may cut off self-indulgence, not "fare sumptuously every day," but feed the poor of Christ. If we cannot use "intense watchings," at least, we may break off sloth, and be beforehand with the morning, to "cry unto the Lord our God," or by night, the image of death may come over us, with penitential words^f on our lips and in our heart. If a penitent cannot, with Ahab and the penitents of Holy Scripture, gird hair-cloth around his loins, at least he need not "wear soft clothing and live delicately;" he can pray God to gird him with continence, and "cut off from himself things lawful as he remembereth that he committed things unlawful^g." If we may not with the Publican, "smite on the breast," at least, we may seek the intense inward humiliation of the Publican; may love to be "abased" rather than to be "exalted;" take reproach gladly, shun and dread respect and praise; be the last, outwardly, when we can, and, inwardly, ever. If we may not with St. Paul "bruise the body," we may by God's grace break in pieces our own self-will. [Penitents of old scourged the body, in adoring thought of Him by Whose stripes we were healed; *we* may at least, with S. Augustine^h, "lash our souls with scourges of condemnation that they may follow us, striving to go after God."] If we cannot lie in dust and ashes, at least we may in contrition of heart, own ourselves to be "dust and ashes." If duty forbids our retiring from the world, with S. Jerome, at least, from time to time, we may, with Jeremiah, "sit alone because of Thy Handⁱ," "sit alone

^f As one of our Bishops fell asleep, night by night, saying the 51st Psalm.

^g Si quis in fornicationem, vel fortasse, quod est gravius, in adulterium lapsus est, tanto a se licita debet abscindere, quanto se meminit et illicita perpetrasset. S. Greg. in Ev. l. c.

^h Conf. viii. 7. §. 18. The passage was omitted in delivery, inasmuch as the very mention must suggest a practice which may be very humbling and hallowed, if done in memory of "The Scourging," but in which penitents should not judge for themselves.

ⁱ Jer. xv. 17.

and keep silence^k, bearing the yoke upon us," we "may put our mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope." If we may not use austerities which wear the body, at least we may long, with S. Paul, "to spend and to be spent;" we may lawfully wear ourselves in body and mind for the souls and bodies of our brethren. The punitive measures of the Ancient Church were in part to chastise the flesh which sinned, in part, as the natural accompaniments of sorrow. "If one member of the body is afflicted, all the rest suffer with it." "And if," adds Bp. Taylor^l, "the heart be troubled, he that is gay in any other part, goes about to lessen his trouble; and that takes off, it does not promote, repentance." We make all outward things to harmonize with deep human sorrow; are we sincere, if we heap^o around ourselves every thing out of harmony with Divine? True "sadness" of heart, whereby it "is made better," heart-broken sorrow for having offended God, is itself the truest, deepest, penance; whatever besides, the Ancient Church recommended to aid it, this, as it is the end of all, so is it every where, in every form, enforced as the very chiefest amends to God^m. Let any obtain it in what way he can, it is a great gift of God; let any in any way obtain deep sorrow of heart out of hatred for his sin and love for his Redeemer, and he will fulfil the conditions and bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.

Advent, like penitence itself, has a mingled character of sorrow, and awe, and hope, and joy: sorrow for sin and wasted grace; awe at Judgment to come; yet hope and joy too, that He Who "shall come to be our Judge," at this time, "to deliver man, abhorred not the Virgin's

^k Lam. iii. 28, 29.

^l On Repentance, c. x. sect. vi. on Ecclesiastical Penance, or the Fruits of Repentance.

^m e. g. "tears which make amends to God," *satisfacientibus Deo fletibus*. St. Cyprian. (Ep. 31. §. 8. see on Tertull. l. c. p. 371 sqq.) Bp. Taylor l. c. §. 74. "Sorrow and mourning," §. 80. "prayers." The very title of repentance.

womb." Our own Liturgy, in every change which was made, brings before us the stricter side^a, as if to say, "sow in tears," that ye may "reap in joy." Earnestness in Advent is the harbinger of Christmas joy; the Baptist's preaching of repentance prepares the heart to hear the song of Angel-Choirs; first we hear "Glory to God," then "on earth peace, good-will towards men;" awe of the Day of Judgment must make us fill up the low places of our earthliness, and lower the eminences of our pride, make straight our crooked ways, and soften our asperities and all contrary to love, would we, in the end, "see the Salvation of our God."

Nature itself dictates, at the closing year, to make up our account with God; conscience feels an awe at this yearly image of the close of all things; the Church brings Judgment before us; grace ever says in our inmost hearts, "*now* is the accepted time." Well were it then, my younger brethren, now, if ye never have before, to set before you the Day of days; when the earth and all that is therein, its pomps, its vanities, its desires, all which would now draw away your souls from God, shall be burned up, and nothing shall remain but what can abide the searching fire of God's judgment. Set before you that dread Judgment-seat, where they who have not before sued for mercy, shall find none; imagine every thought, word, or deed of shame, all which thou now wouldest hide from thyself, brought to light before the whole company of heaven and earth; set before your eyes, with our own holy penitent^o, "the Just Judge; excuse unavailing; proof unanswerable; punishment inexorable; hell unending; Angels unpitying; the yawning pit; the sweeping stream of fire; fire unquenchable; the prison-house dark; the rayless darkness; the

^a See Pref. to Avrillon Guide for Advent, p. xxviii sqq.

^o Bp. Andrewes. Meditation 1. (p. 234. ed. Hall.) It is thought to have been his midnight prayer.

bed of living coals; the worm unsleeping; the chains indissoluble; the bottomless abyss; the wall impassable; the wailing unpitied;" behold thyself there, trembling, ashamed; all without, terror; conscience within, gnawing; unable to hide thyself or to appear; thy own darkness more intolerable in that light; Heaven, too late longed for, and fading away; the Face and the love of God lost for ever; the misery of devils thy portion for ever; "none to stand by thee, none to plead for thee, none to deliver thee," and so "judge thyself, that thou be not judged of the Lord;" so, while there is yet time, say with that same pious penitent, "I repent, O Lord, I repent; help Thou my unrepentance, and more and yet more, pierce, rend, bruise my heart."

And when thou hast judged and condemned and humbled thyself, then seek how thou mayest compensate past evils by future good; past neglect by future zeal. Shew that thou prizest thine own soul, which thou hadst forfeited and God restores to thee, which thou hadst defiled, and God anew cleanseth, by Thy love for the souls of thy brethren. God can overrule to good even past evil. Penitents have ever been among His chosen vessels. When a chief Apostle had denied Him in the judgment hall, a penitent confessed Him, even on the Cross; and "before^p Apostles" was translated from his cross to Paradise, the first-fruits of our redeemed race. When Apostles fled, a penitent, with His Virgin Mother and beloved Disciple, amid the scoffs of an unbelieving world, stood beneath His Cross. The chiefest of the Apostles were chief in penitence. He to whom first were given "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," on whose confession the Church was built, the chosen instrument to bring both Jew and Gentile converts into the fold, of all had fallen deepest, and wept most bitterly; [and it is thought, morning

by morning, his whole life long, wept his fall.] He who was caught into the third Heaven, "in labours more abundant, in deaths oft," "not a whit behind the chiefest Apostles," owns himself most lowly, "the chief of sinners," "an abortive birth¹." The "man after God's own heart" even now perhaps wins more souls to God by his deep penitence, than by the noble faith wherein he slew the Philistine, or his long-tried unwearied trust in God. The deep tones of sorrow wherein he poured out his soul to God have been the voice of every later penitent whom God has recalled, the parting words of Saints^r within sight of Paradise. In later times the chief Doctor of our Western Church had been its most signal penitent. Penitence was the garb of the mighty Prophet, who was caught up in the chariot of fire, who knew not death; the image of the Ascension of our Lord: it was the life of him, who came "in the spirit and power of Elias," the great Forerunner, sanctified from his mother's womb, who before his birth foretold the coming of his Lord: he who was first Bishop of Jerusalem, and sat first in the Apostolic Council, whom Jews and Christians alike entitled James the Just, led a life of austere penitence². "The two witnesses³," who shall have power given them in heaven

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 18.

^r "He" [St. Augustine] "had been wont to say to us, in familiar converse, that, after Baptism received, even esteemed Christians and priests ought not to part out of the body without worthy and competent penitence. Which he himself also did in the last sickness, whereof he deceased. For he had directed that those very few Psalms of David on penitence [the seven penitential Psalms] should be written out for him, and placed against the wall. These leaves, as he lay in the bed, he stedfastly gazed upon and read during the days of his sickness, and wept largely and continually. And lest his attention should be distracted by any one, about ten days before he departed from the body, he asked of us who were present, that no one should come in to him, except just when the physicians came to look at him, or refreshment was brought him. This was observed and done; and all that time he gave himself to prayer." Life by Possidius, c. 31.

² Hegepp. ap. Euseb. H. E. ii. 23.

³ Rev. xi. 3—12.

and earth, uniting the mighty deeds of those who were seen with our Lord in His glory, who, like Elijah, "shall have power to shut heaven that it rain not in the days of their prophecy," and, like Moses, shall "have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues" (not once only as in Egypt, but) "as often as they will;" who shall be likened to their Lord in His Resurrection and Ascension, shall through their whole time of prophecy wear the garb of penitence^u.

So would God teach us how precious is penitence in His sight. The beginning of the Christian life, it accompanies it to the end. The groundwork of conversion, the companion of faith, the enlargement of love, the soothing fosterer of hope, the condition of holiness; it leads to the mercies of Christ, it opens all the treasures of the love of God. It restores from the lowest depths of sin; it increases with all real growth in grace; it is intensest in those in whom grace hath most wrought its work. Penitent thyself, thou shalt learn to speak to the hearts of penitents. Thou knowest too well the wounds which enter the soul; thou wilt know the healing wherewith the Great Physician shall have healed thee. Thou knowest the sorrows and plague of thine own heart; thou wilt know the comfort, wherewith thou shalt be comforted of God. Earnestness, indignation, fear, longing, zeal, revenge, are the Apostolic tokens of penitence, and, by the Apostle's mouth, won the

^u "Clothed in sackcloth." The *σάκκος* was "haircloth," (Zech. xiii. 4. 2 Kings i. 8. Matt. iii. 4. Jos. B. Jud. i. 17.) it was the prophet's garb, so that even false prophets were compelled to assume it. (Zech. i. c.) see also Is. xxx. 2. "Holy preachers are hard, because they speak not soft things to sinners; they are also hard, because, that they may amend others soundly, they shew, in their own converse, the hardnesses which they recommend. For hard did he seem who reproved the Jews, saying, "O generation of vipers, who &c. Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance." But he who was hard to others was not relaxed to himself. For, to shew that he held to the hardness of penitence which he taught, the Evangelist said, "He had raiment of camel's hair &c." S. Greg. in 1 Reg. c. v. §. 20.

admiration of God Himself (*ποσθην*). These must first burn within, then without; first, consume self as an offering to God, then burst abroad in the burning longing for His glory; first, His "Spirit of burning" within, then that "fire upon the earth," which He would have "kindled." So alone can the children of the Church, scattered in the colonies without a shepherd, be gathered into the fold of Christ; so alone can the bitter waters of infidelity and barbarism and heathenish sin, pent up in our cities, be sweetened by the Cross of Christ. So, alone, can we "prepare the way of the Lord, and make straight in the desert a highway for our God." The grace of thy God to thee shall not have been received in vain, but shall overflow to the salvation of those for whom, with thee, Christ died. "God Who made the light to shine out of darkness," when He hath "shined in thy heart," shall let His light in thee or thy light in Him, so "shine before men," in the "good works" which He shall work in thee, that they shall "glorify thy Father which is in heaven^x." Sorrow for thy sins shall be to thee the Baptism of tears; to consume thine years "in labours more abundant" for Christ's sake, "that where sin abounded, grace may much more abound," has a portion of the Martyr's Baptism of blood. "If," says an early Bishop and Martyr^y, "if any move Him by his own amends, if by due entreaties, he appease His wrath, and the displeasure of His indignation, He too will again give arms to the conquered, renew and strengthen his powers, quicken his recovered faith. The soldier shall renew his warfare, enter the battle, challenge the foe, wrought by his very pangs more valiant for the fight. Who shall have thus made amends to God, who by penitence for his deeds, by shame for his sin, shall, from the very grief for his fall, have gained more of virtue and of faith, he, heard and holpen by the Lord, shall

^x 2 Cor. iv. 6. S. Matt. v. 16.

^y St. Cyprian de laps. fin.

gladden the Church which he lately saddened, and now shall obtain of God not pardon only, but a crown."

To which He, of His Infinite mercy, bring us sinners, Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth, One God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Note A, page 9.

The original of the passages of S. Ambrose is "Remittuntur peccata per Dei verbum, cujus levites interpres et quidam executor est: remittuntur etiam per officium sacerdotis, sacrumque ministerium." The contrast in the two sentences seems to be much the same as in the other places, before quoted, between the authority of God and the ministry of man. Elsewhere, he says, "Sins are forgiven by the Holy Ghost, but men supply their *ministry* (ministerium) yet do not exercise the right of any power (jus alicujus potestatis), for they do not forgive sins in their own, but in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. They pray, God giveth; the service (obsequium) is through man, the richness of the gift (munificentia) is from the Power on High." (de Sp. S. iii. 18. §. 137.) As there S. Ambrose contrasts the "right and power" and the "gift," on the part of God, with the "obsequium" and "ministerium," on the part of man, so here "per Dei verbum" as the authority, with the "executor" and "officium sacerdotis, sacrumque ministerium," as the agency employed. The Levite, (more ordinarily the Deacon,) is by S. Ambrose explained before to be the "Minister Dei." It is possible, indeed, that by "Dei verbum" S. Ambrose meant, not "the word," but "the Word of God," (as he had just said, §. 13. anima in qua habitat Dei Verbum,) and then "Remittuntur peccata per Dei Verbum" would be equivalent to what he says in the de Sp. S. "per Spiritum Sanctum peccata donantur." In this case the meaning would be "Sins are remitted by the Word of God, Whose minister and, as it were, executor the Levite is." In this sense Gratian (de pœnit. dist. 1. c. 51. Verbum Dei) and P. Lombard (4. dist. 18.) seem to have understood it, (although they quote but little of the passage and that inaccurately, Verbum Dei dimittit peccata, and blend with it words from the De Sp. S.) The Benedictines take it of the word of God, as also does Bp. Jewel, (Def. of Apol. P. 2. p. 145.) although he does not consider the whole passage, breaking off in the middle, "Remittuntur peccata per verbum Dei, cujus Levites interpres."

The meaning of this passage of S. Ambrose is further illustrated by the well-known passage of S. Augustine, which Bp. Jewel also quotes, "Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken to you." Why saith He not, Ye are clean through the Baptism wherewith ye have been baptized? Saving that in water also the word cleanseth? Take away the word, and what is water but water? The word is added to the element, and it becomes a Sacrament, which itself also is a sort of visible word." (in Joh. Tract. 80. §. 3.^a)

In the same sense S. Augustine defines "the Baptism of Christ," as "Baptism consecrated by the words of the Gospel," (de Bapt. c. Don. vi. §. 47.) and again, (ib.) "God is present with His own Gospel words, without which the Baptism of Christ cannot be consecrated, and Himself hallows His own Sacrament." As then Baptism has its efficacy, according to S. Augustine, not through any power of man, but through the words which Christ appointed, "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," so also, according to S. Ambrose, has Absolution *its* efficacy, not through any right of man, but through the "word" of Christ's commission, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted." Man, in either case, is the Minister only.

A third passage which Bp. Jewel and Bingham quote from S. Jerome does not relate to the subject of absolution of sins into which Christians fall, but to the forgiveness of sins through the first embracing of the Faith of Christ. The whole passage is a comment on Is. xiv. 15. "We *all* were bound and were held shut up in prison, to whom, being bound, the Saviour said, 'Go forth,' and to those who were in darkness, 'Shew yourselves.' 'For the Lord looseth the bound.' Who, being freed by Him, return thanks, saying, 'Thou hast loosed my bonds.' For each 'is bound by the cords of his sins,' which cords and bonds, the Apostles too can loose, imitating their Master, Who had said to them, 'Whatever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.' But the Apostles loose them by the word of God, and testimonies of Scriptures, and exhortation to virtues." This wider meaning of the words, (S. Matt. xviii.) including the first entrance into the Christian covenant, does not, of course, exclude the more special. S. Chrysostom, S. Ambrose, S. Cyril Alex., S. Leo, unite remission by Baptism and Penitence, yet as distinct acts of the same Power. (See Sermon i. p. 32. n. s.)

Bp. Jewel himself, it should be said, denies the necessity only, not the lawfulness of, private confession, nor does he limit "the office of

^a S. Augustine, in the context, blends with the word of consecration, the word as believed, (since without faith Baptism could avail nothing,) yet the consecrating power he ascribes to the words used at Baptism, just as S. Chrys. and the Greek fathers. "By what word?" "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." See, further, Tracts on Holy Baptism, p. 198. ed. 2. and note F. Additional Notes Ed. 1.

loosing" to "the preaching of the Gospel." He would restrain it to "open crimes," yet, in such cases, he believes that "the Minister doth, after the perfect amendment of such as, by their sins, had banished and *made themselves strangers from the common fellowship, and from the Body of Christ, reconcile and restore them to the Company and Unity of the faithful,*" (Apol. 6. Dis. 2.) i. e. whereas they were before out of Christ, they are thereby restored to be "in Christ," the highest spiritual change which can be!

Note on p. 12. l. 6. "She distinctly says in her Homily ^a."

(Accidentally omitted.)

^a "Of common prayer and Sacraments." And this declaration is the stronger, because the writer of the Homily is, in that very place, contending, that "according to the *exact* signification of a sacrament, namely for the visible signs, *expressly* commanded in the New Testament, whereunto is annexed the promise of free forgiveness of our sin, and of our holiness and joining in Christ, there be but two, namely Baptism and the Supper of the Lord." The author of the Homily continues: "For although absolution hath the promise of forgiveness of sin; yet by the express word of the New Testament it hath not this promise annexed and tied to the visible sign, which is imposition of hands. For this visible sign (I mean laying on of hands) is not expressly commanded in the New Testament to be used in Absolution, as the visible signs in Baptism and the Lord's Supper are: and therefore Absolution is *no such Sacrament* as Baptism and the Communion are."

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